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ABSTRACT

This paper describes successful indoor adventure activities that are used in the Georgia correctional system for treating substance abuse with adolescents and adults. An experiential style of learning is appropriate for adolescent and adult offenders who have typically not done well in traditional settings and are usually slow- or poorly-achieving students. In order for learning to be generalized into everyday life it is necessary for the participant to debrief what happened both physically and emotionally during adventure activities. Treatment programs based on adventure education in Georgia's juvenile system were designed to enhance and expand drug use treatment services for male and female offenders. A newly designed program also works for adult offenders. Because of limitations imposed for security reasons, adventure activities need to be designed specifically for this population for indoor use. A description of indoor activities include quail shooter's delight, group juggling, line up, blind line up, and mine field. These activities were designed to promote team spirit and to strengthen the bond within the group. Debriefing after activities encourages participants to focus on their feelings and appropriate expression of feelings. The described activities demonstrate how traditional adventure programming ideas can be used successfully in an indoor setting when working with substance-abusing adolescents or adults who are incarcerated. (LP)

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Successful Indoor Adventure Activities for Treating Substance Abuse with Adjudicated Adolescents and Incarcerated Adults

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Abstract

While adventure activities have been effective with adjudicated adolescents, facilitators unable to use traditional outdoor settings (e.g., initiative or ropes courses) can find their creativity limited by institutional security rules. This paper shares framing and debriefing for several indoor activities found to be successful in substance abuse treatment with adolescents and adults.

Introduction

Between 1980 and 1989 the number of adult arrests reported by state and local law enforcement agencies for drug violations increased 165%. Sixty-five percent of the persons arrested were under the age of 30. An estimated 1.25 million arrests occurred in 1989 alone (NBJS, 1990). Unfortunately, the increase in drug arrests was not balanced by a decrease in other areas of criminal behavior. The prison system was asked to expand in order to fulfill court ordered prison sentences for adolescents and adults. The increasing number of arrests coupled with the relatively young age of the offender has begun to pose additional problems for corrections officials. There is a need for alternative and innovative treatment programs that are short-term, intensive, inexpensive, and effective for adult and delinquent populations. Georgia's adult and juvenile correctional systems have attempted to deal with this problem with treatment services that focus on an adventure-oriented delivery system to actively engage drug abusing offenders in their education and recovery. This article will describe some of the more successful adventure activities that have been used indoors within the Georgia system.

Why Adventure can Work in a Correctional Facility

An experiential style of learning is tailor-made for adolescent and adult offenders. This population has not done well in traditional settings, they are usually slow or poorly achieving students which, according to Dunn (1988) means they (1) need more structure, (2) work better with an informal, tactile-kinesthetic design, and (3) are often act-out impulsively. Characteristic traits of criminal offenders have been cited as inability to communicate, low self esteem, poor relations with others, lack of confidence in environmental coping skills, inability to delay gratification or pursue long range goals, low threshold of frustration, impulsiveness, unwillingness to cooperate or respect authority, and inability to form trusting relationships (Bacon & Kimball, 1989; Bandoroff, 1990, 1991). This characterization seems to support a study by Reckless and Dintz (1972) which proposed that a negative self-concept contributed to criminal activity. In addition, Golins (1978) cited three

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principle characteristics in young criminal offenders:

1) An extreme unwillingness to assume responsibility for self and others along socially acceptable lines.
(2) limited learners...their thinking seems to be overtly concrete for their age. (3) Their affective posture is debilitating...they lack confidence in themselves and others.

Despite these characteristics, Golins (1978) believes that most offenders possess a desire for reconciliation toward the laws and norms of society. Within the offender this desire exists as a form of energy which can be expressed in an adventure program. The offender experiences the dilemma of being in the habit of acting out angrily at society (thus receiving punishment) yet recognizes that the only hope of maintaining freedom is conformity (Golins, 1978). The offender seems to be searching for a method of conformity whereby they can join society in the least submissive way. The criminal offender as an adventure participant is unique in that, unlike other adventure participants, they are not there because of a recognized need to change; rather, they have been ordered to attend by the court.

Adventure based therapeutic programs share goals which are consistent with the goals of many correctional treatment programs by attempting to improve the self-concept bring about positive change (Florida State Department of Health and Rehabilitation Services., 1978; Gibson, 1981; Kelly & Baer, 1968, 1971; Stewart, 1978; Stremba, 1977; Weeks, 1986; & Winderdyk, 1980). In order for lessons learned while participating in a n adventure experience to be generalized into everyday life it is necessary to debrief what happened both physically and emotionally to the participant during the activity. The process of self actualization does not automatically follow a confrontation of self with most individuals. Personal growth occurs when participants recognize, articulate, and reflect on feelings that arise from their experiences (Bandoroff, 1990, 1991). It is the process of generalizing the lessons learned on the ropes course into lessons for daily life which is the greatest challenge faced by any adventure program (Kimball, 1986). The importance of debriefing period is the main difference between a therapeutic adventure program and outdoor recreation. When therapeutically utilized, an adventure program becomes adventure based rehabilitation that emphasizes group dynamics, group interaction; activities in trust, communication, decision making, problem solving, personal responsibility, and social responsibility (Lieberman & De Vos, 1982). Utilizing an adventure based program for offenders gives them an opportunity to function in a goal oriented society with consistent consequences and try on the role of a responsible person at least for the amount of time they are in the program.

Golins (1978) suggested the following five significant properties that adventure based programs possess that provide the criminal offender with an acceptable method of conformity.

(1) **Gamelike atmosphere.** The gamelike atmosphere seduces the offender into "trying on" new responsible behaviors if only for a short period of time. The instructor will not suggest that the offender follow this behavior pattern forever and thus it becomes a game of acting for the moment.

(2) **Participants are in peer groups.** The potential to serve as a model for other offenders to develop individual strengths while functioning as an active member of a group is fundamental to adventure activities. Throughout the adventure activities, individual achievement is not of primary importance, group achievement is the criteria for success. For some offenders this will represent the first time they have considered the benefit of others.

(3) **Characteristic Nature of Problems Posed.** First, the challenges are based on the individual learning needs of the participant. Second, challenges are incremental. Confidence is cultivated through the successful accumulation of skills. Programming success is of utmost importance due to the offenders tendency toward self defeating behavior. The incremental nature of the problems is critical. By achieving early success, the offender experiences a feeling of power and competence which may be inconsistent with existing self perceptions.

(4) **Style of Instruction.** Adventure programs, with the exclusion of the safety techniques, are set up so the instructor is not the "expert" whose method must be mastered in order to achieve success. Success in the low elements and group activities depends upon the group expectations. High elements allow an offender to push his/her personal limits while being supported emotionally by the group.

(5) **Using the Outdoors.** The use of an outdoor environment can take the offender out of his/her element. The laws of nature are in effect and there is no tolerance for games or tricks they may have learned on the streets. Nature also presents itself in a very physical, realistic way. The challenges provided are real, and the solution must come from the natural abilities of the participants. In addition, the beauty of the outdoors can promote a feeling of well being which can enhance the self image of the participant (Gobel, 1970).

How Adventure can Fail in a Correctional Facility

It is this Golin's (1978) point, the use of an outdoor environment that can limit some programs in correctional facilities. To find an activity which can create both physical and emotional stress, and be conducted inside a correctional facility in a controlled situation (due to security rules) can tax many counselors and program specialists who wish to use adventure programming with their population. The challenging and stressful atmosphere created by adventure activities in a group atmosphere is a key for bringing about the confrontation of self among offenders. When treatment staff have been trained outdoors at a site which has a challenge ropes course and/or an extensive low initiative course, they can develop a mindset that challenging activities can only take place when a group is place in a similar site. If their facility is unable to have such a site, then think adventure activities are unavailable to them. In Georgia, several alternative methods have been employed in correctional systems which utilize varying degrees of adventure based techniques within the offender rehabilitation programs.

An alternative treatment program in Georgia juvenile system consist of a cooperative program between the State of Georgia's (USA) Department of Children and Youth Services and Project Adventure, Inc. in Covington, Georgia designed to enhance and expand drug use treatment services for male and female offenders (Gillis & Simpson, 1990). Substance of choice for the clients are typically alcohol, marijuana, crack, and/or cocaine. Clients of this program are committed to two of the Georgia's Youth Development Centers in Macon and Atlanta. Georgia (USA). The four-staged program is comprehensive and focuses on life skills, the development of self-esteem/efficacy, risk factor reduction, and resiliency factor reinforcement. Family and individual change models are incorporated into each stage. Clients participate in individual and group counseling sessions. Phase I of the program takes place within the Youth Development Centers, Phase II (Team Building/Goal Setting) involves eight (8) weeks of intensive treatment in a structured-open environment at Project Adventure.site in Covington, Georgia. Clients are required to campout three weeks in a wooded area and participate in games and activities on the ropes course daily. During non-campout weeks, clients will live in residential placement homes staffed by Project Adventure employees. Family and

mentor visitation is allowed during the second and sixth week of placement. During the highly structured weekend, parents will participate in parent education training.

Phase III (Life Skills Training) incorporates all youth who have completed Phase II, and may include some youth directly from Phase I. This phase is a minimum of eight (8) weeks, but may be extended for some clients, depending on their progress and treatment needs. Youth are exposed to varied experiences designed to strengthen the skills obtained in previous phases and provide practical life skills training which insure a more successful adjustment to aftercare. During Phase III, a client either work s on pre-GED or GED preparation during the day on-site at Project Adventure or attends Newton County (Georgia) Public Schools. All clients are required to participate in weekly discussion groups where topics such as cultural competency, relapse prevention, and stress reduction will be discussed. Meetings with family are also a requirement in this phase. Indoor and outdoor adventure activities are used in both phases of Project Adventure's program.

In Georgia's adult correctional system, the newest state wide substance abuse education curriculum was designed to utilize a dynamic approach rather than the traditional lecture style approach to offender education. The program will be implemented throughout Georgia's correctional services encompassing parole, probation, and correctional institutions. All individuals entering the correctional system after Janurary 1, 1993 will be required to attend the substance abuse education program. The curriculum is interactive and holistic, focusing on relationships with others, problem solving, meaning in life, and wellness; and includes how these areas can be affected by substance abuse. Each of the four focal areas can be presented in full (four 90 minute classes,) or condensed (one 90 minute overview) depending upon the facilities time restrictions. Therapeutic activities can be used throughout the curriculum; and range from warm-ups to interactive, situational drama. The curriculum is open ended, with each instructor having the freedom to vary the progression of supplements (i.e., films, activities, presentations, or debates) in a manner which best fits the group needs.

The participatory style of instruction for which this curriculum was designed represents a radical shift in the treatment approach being used by Georgia's Department of Corrections. Historically, Georgia's correctional substance abuse education curriculum was designed to be administered in lecture format, with no limitation on the number of offenders who could attend a session. The new curriculum sets a maximum number of participants per session (25), and is receptive to Dunn's (1988) recommendation of an informal, tactile-kinesthetic design. This style of instruction has been implemented with favorable results within localized correctional institutions, independently serving male and female offenders, while utilizing both therapeutic activities as well as a holistic approach to dealing with substance abuse. Numerous indoor activities have been found to be successful when working with drug abusing offenders while teaching about recovery, focusing on life skills or examining ways to be successful when released (pre-release). In order to help counselors become more creative in using adventure at their site. The various activities contained in the curriculum were chosen for accessibility to the indoors and requiring little or no materials which cannot be found within a typical institution.

Successful Activities used in Corrections

What follows are a series of activities designed for use in group sessions in correctional settings. The activities are designed to parallel concepts in the substance abuse, life skills, and pre-release curriculum. These activities have been tried and tested with both the adult and adolescent populations that have proven to be successful in working with adolescents and adults who have previously been involved in substance abuse. Several of these activities are designed to promote a

team spirit and to strengthen the bond within the group. Group sizes of 12-25 have been kept in mind when designing these activities. Sometimes it will be necessary to divide the group in half or have them work with a partner.

Sequencing. The activities are presented in a sequence that moves from easier to more difficult. The activities should be approached in this manner such that those in the beginning are attempted prior to moving to those at the end. There is no need to take the activities in an exact sequential order; the leader is encouraged to mix and match activities to meet his or her goals for a particular counseling session.

A typical sequence within any session will be to try several short warm-up activities described in the first unit before attempting the main activity for the session. These warm-ups, while brief, can serve to get the group into a spirit of working together that can make the group counseling session more productive.

Warm-up activities. Any one of these activities can be used as a warm up to any of the other sessions. It is advisable for the counselor to use 1-2 warm-ups per session in the beginning sessions of the group and maybe have one during the latter sessions of the group experience. When a group session is starting, many times the offenders are not settled in a frame of mind to begin to work or are so tired from the days activities that they are about to fall asleep. These activities help stimulate the mind and prepare the offender for the main activity by having the offender move around and participate in a short activity. The warm up activities are particularly well received by the incarcerated offenders due to the fact that most large group interaction within an institution is work related or mentally stressful. These activities give the offenders an opportunity to enjoy the benefits of a large group in a non-threatening and noncompetitive atmosphere.

(1) **Quail shooter's delight** (Phones and Faxes) (Rohnke, 1984, p. 63): Equipment needed: enough soft Frisbees, nerf balls, clean socks, or combination for all group members to have one. Have two group members stand back to back in the center of the circle of group members. The object is to have all group members throw their object to the members in the middle and see how many items the pair in the middle can catch. Try several pairs and see who can catch the most.

(2) **Group juggling** (Rohnke, 1989, page 84) Equipment needed include several tennis balls, clean socks, or nerf balls. With the group standing in a circle, the object is to begin one ball in a sequence by throwing it to someone in the group who in turn throws it to someone else until all group members have had the ball. Group members should remember the sequence that the balls were thrown since the object is to have several balls going at once following the original sequence. So after the sequence has been well established, start one ball and follow it with another and another and another. With incarcerated persons this activity has been shown to develop a sense of empathy among the individual group members.

(3) **Line Up(s)** (Rohnke, 1988 page 112 and (1984 , page 163) where you give the group a criteria by which to form a single file line. The criteria can be a simple as alphabetic line up by first name, age, birth-month, shoe size, weight, height, distance home town is from site, etc.

Debriefing of Warm-ups The purpose of the warm-ups is to get the group ready for the main activity. There is usually no discussion unless some unusual event

takes place such as one member being very uncooperative or the group relating their inability to complete a task to some other issue going on in the group. On occasion, activities such as Quail shooter's delight or group juggling can be generalized into the 12 step concepts of helplessness or a sequential lifestyle.

One of the prime ways warm-ups are used in addition to getting the group ready are as assessment of the groups' readiness to move on to another activity. Noting the groups' resistance or willingness to work together is valuable information for the leader that is rarely accessed by just talking to them. In most instances, the individuals will look forward to the activities as a part of the group process using the cooperation and support generated by an activity as a base from which to build the interpersonal value needed in order to have an effective learning experience.

Blind line up (Rohnke, 1988, page 112,) Equipment required includes blindfolds if the eyes closed method is not used). Like many of the activities, this one provides an opportunity to experience helpless and powerlessness when the offender does not know how to communicate successfully with others in the group or does not know what is expected of him or her. An additional advantage of this activity is setting up and intentional liar who tries to con the group into believing him or her and thus preventing the group from achieving its goal..

Split the group in half for this activity. Number the group from "1" to ever how many people are in that half of the group. Tell the group they must communicate without speaking in this activity. The object is to have the group line up in an order you have given them. Number each group off and have them begin.

After the group has successfully lined up you can attempt the activity again with a "twist". Tell the group one member will be designated as a liar/fooler and that person's job is to confuse the group members by giving them false information and by generally mixing them up. The group member's job is to determine when they are being lied to and when they are being told the truth. If the believe they are being lied to they can point their finger in the direction of the liar and say "liar". If they are successful in pointing out the liar the liar is out of the game for 30 seconds. If they are unsuccessful, they have blown their chance since they only have one opportunity to call the liar's bluff.

Debrief It can be very useful to focus on the feelings of group members when they first participated in the activity. What was it like to not know where you belonged in the group? What are other times in your life when you have felt similar? What was the feeling when you found your proper place in the group? What are other times in your life when you have felt similar? The experience of being lied to is also very useful to discuss here. How do you know when you are being lied to and when you are being told the truth? How can you tell the difference? When are you not sure? What can you do about it? When the lineup is performed with eyes closed it can be interesting to notice which of the participants is cheating and discuss the advantages of looking during such an activity. Was it more or less satisfying to complete the activity by cheating? Following the rules gives the offender an opportunity to act responsibly and gain an almost immediate sense of satisfaction for doing so.

Mine Field (Rohnke, 1988, page 51). Equipment needed includes blindfolds; and some pre-activity set-up is required. Site preparation will require a rope being placed on the floor approximately 15-20 in width and for a length of 20-30 feet. If no rope is available, establishing a boundary with chairs, desks, or tables can be accomplished with a little effort. Within the boundaries spread all of the balls, frisbees, some chairs and other furniture that each pair will need to negotiate. This activity has been performed within institutions by placing individuals within certain boundaries inside the minefield. The individuals would then become the obstacles and would take on the duty of sounding like some of the relapse obstacles the offender is likely to face upon release.

This is an excellent activity for focusing on encouragement and positive feedback. The pairs find it difficult to communicate directions clearly in the beginning but are able to see some success as they continue. The activity also offers a way to help anticipate problems in the future and discuss ways to get around them or avoid them entirely. Use the entire group for these activities. The group will need to pair up but should all stay together. It can be useful to have the group members try the mine field by themselves prior to having them pair up and attempt it.

After group members have a chance to try the activity on their own, have them pair up and start from different ends of the mine field, several pairs at a time. The guiding partner must stay outside of the boundary and direct the other partner. If/when they run into something, they are out..

Following several pairs in the mine field, note how the guiding partners may be using many "negative" guiding words (don't, no, or labeling somebody as a fool, etc.) Comment on these guiding words and ask the group to accept an additional challenge of only using positive, encouraging words in their guidance.

Debrief This is a powerful and very fun activity which can generate the following routes (to name a few) for discussion. (1) The success of going at the mine field alone versus having some guidance can be discussed. (2) The different forms of guidance: typical versus limited to encouragement can be discussed. (3) The difficulty of making guiding statements clear and getting people to do what you want is also worthy of discussion. (4) This activity lends itself to discussions of addiction in that the person trying to make it on their own is usually not a successful as the person who is willing to accept some help. How are the offenders similar or different in real life from the way they reacted to the mine field? Did an offender intentionally lead another into an obstacle because they did not perform well while they walked through? What did it feel like to temporarily lose the voice of the partner and be lost among the obstacles? Did it seem familiar to have the odds against an errorless performance? How did the offender define success in the minefield?

If the counselor is able to use actual beer and liquor bottle, rolled up newspaper (joints) or oregano in baggies, sugar or lumps of baking soda in plastic bags, or monopoly money (for the dealers) within the mine field, the direct relationship to finding a successful way through a world of drugs. In the discussion the counselor can have the offender anticipate what problems they may have in finding their way successfully through the field of available drugs and money.

Summary

These representative activities demonstrate how traditional adventure programming ideas can be used successfully in an indoor setting when working with substance abusing adolescents or adults who are incarcerated. All of the equipment variations mentioned in the activities have been used within correctional institutions and are evidence of how these activities can be successful with extremely limited resources. It would be unfair not to admit that within correctional institutions the initial reaction of the offenders to the idea of beginning these activities is somewhat skeptical. However, if the counselor or program specialist has the desire and energy to simply begin these activities, the offenders may soon find themselves drawn into cooperating and actually enjoying the activities more so than they first imagined. Finally, the attention that these activities draw within an institution is considerable; and thus the debrief process and the therapeutic goals of the program become crucial elements of the activities. As professionals working with clients, be constantly aware of the group interactions and the therapeutic benefits of these activities will become evident.

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